

## MINUTES

### Board of Trustees: July 15, 2020, Virtual Meeting First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

**Board Members Attending:** Scott Smith, President (2021); Lynne Porterfield (2021); Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary (2021); Ebe Emmons, Vice-President (2022); Sam Hens-Greco (2022); Heather Masterson (2023), Kyle Gracey, Treasurer (2023), Kate Snow (2023)

**Board Members Absent:** Julie Downs (2022)

**Ex Officio Members:** Rev. Constance Grant, Interim Minister

**Visitors:** None

**Others:** Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary

1. **Call to Order (7:03) (Scott)** Scott called the meeting to order.
2. **Opening Words (Kyle)** Excerpt from a prayer by Sarah Eileen Lowe.
3. **Welcoming Guests (Scott)** None
4. **Announcements (Scott)**
  - a. The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be on August 19, 2020.
5. **Consent Agenda (Scott) (handouts)**
  - a. Approval of June 17, 2020 meeting minutes. Approved as amended. Moved by Scott. Seconded by Kate.
  - b. Finance Committee meeting minutes (Kyle)
  - c. 2nd quarter financial reports
  - d. Summary of relevant GA decisions
6. **New planning process for Board meetings (Eleanor)** The Executive Committee is trying to be more systematic and to finalize the meeting agenda earlier so that Board members have more time to read background materials ahead of the meeting. Eleanor will send out a call for agenda items for the August meeting by email by August 4.
7. **Finances (Kyle)**
  - a. 2nd quarter financial reports—key takeaways (handout).
    - i. We are in a stable financial position. We have enough cash for cash-flow purposes. We are about \$14,000 ahead of budget in income and about \$19,000 under budget in spending. Without the \$70,000 PPP loan/grant, our current loss would be about \$25,000 more than what we budgeted for at this point in the year. We are at the halfway point in the year, and the remainder of the year poses considerable financial uncertainty. While the church remains closed, we have no rental income, and we don't know whether pledge payments will continue to come in as promised. The Finance Committee has determined that we have the authority to apply for forgiveness of the PPP loan. Sam noted his opposition to applying for loan forgiveness. He asked that this issue be placed on the agenda for the August Board meeting.
    - ii. A separate checking account is being set up for the Ministerial Search Committee.

- iii. The Finance Committee is now working on the 2021 budget. Kyle will present a preliminary 2021 budget to the Board at the August meeting.
  - iv. The Finance Committee is updating policies and guidelines.
- b. Membership trends and their impact on church finances (continued from last month): We are in a period of sustained reduction in both members/pledge units and pledges. Kyle asked how the church recruits new members and what data we have on the process of “converting” potential new members into actual pledging members. Connie said that the Membership Committee could submit a written report to address these questions.
- 8. Request for ordination from Jessica Halperin (Connie).** Jessica had emailed Connie asking whether First U would be willing to ordain her as a minister, if possible by September. Connie said that she not could support this request, as Jessica is not in preliminary ministerial fellowship nor has she completed a ministerial internship. Under congregational polity, congregations have the ultimate authority to decide who to ordain. However, Connie noted that the UUA does not recommend ordaining someone who has not been fellowshipped. Such an ordination would be recognized only by our church and would not be transferable to another UU congregation. Motion by Sam that the Board consider ordaining Jessica pending an interview with her. Seconded by Lynne. In favor: 7, opposed 1. Motion carries. Connie will let Jessica know ASAP. Sam will coordinate the next steps.
- 9. Minister’s report (Connie)**
- a. She is considering initiating a major redesign of the website. She said that it is proving difficult to keep the site up to date. She asked that Board members contact her with suggestions about what is working or not working with the current website platform. Eleanor noted that the site had been transferred to the current platform, Weebly, within the last couple of years. Weebly had been selected for its ease of use without knowledge of code or web design. The idea had been to decentralize responsibility for keeping the website current. Unfortunately, this is not working as intended.
  - b. **Proposal for Minister’s Benevolence Fund** (handout) Connie requested approval of the proposal, which includes setting up a checking account controlled solely by the Minister. Added to the proposal: that disbursements and documentation will be given to the Treasurer. Any disbursements to church employees must be recorded through payroll. Recipients will sign for disbursements of cash and gift cards. Motion to approve the proposal by Scott; seconded by Ebe. Carried unanimously.
- 10. Bylaws Revision Working Group Update (Ebe)** The group is close to finishing its work. Claus is working on the documents. The plan is to present a draft of the revised Bylaws for Board members’ review in August, followed by a vote in September, with a congregational meeting in October for final approval.
- 11. Building and Grounds**
- a. Update on overcharge for refurbishment of Morewood Ave. doors (Sam): Due to ill health, Ray Schinhofen will not be able to follow-up on this. Sam said that he would check with Martin Schmidt, who has agreed to chair the Building and Grounds Committee for 2 years.
  - b. Update on new Welcome Center desk (Scott). Scott has signed the contract, and half of the amount of the project has been delivered. The carpenter is scheduled to begin work on August 1.

**12. Board retreat on discernment (Ebe, Connie)** Connie will circulate a Doodle poll to identify possible dates for this retreat, which is expected to last about 2 hours.

**13. Appreciations and Aspirations (all)**

**14. Adjourn (8:54) (Scott)**

Respectfully submitted,  
Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary  
(To be) Approved by the Board: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary

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